

*The Empire Turned Upside Down:
The Colonial Fictions
of Anthony Trollope*

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I Reversed Space

IT IS FAIRLY common now for metropolitan British authors to be represented as part of the postcolonial canon. Critics have long since devoted attention to writers like Joseph Conrad and E. M. Forster, who of course set significant portions of their work in Asia and other then-colonized regions of the globe. Finding the hidden colonial echoes and traces in books such as Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* has become a cottage industry.¹ And there have been wider-ranging studies such as Gauri Viswanathan's assertion that the entire existence of English as a literary discipline owes itself to Indian colonial institutions. In all this activity, though, the name of Anthony Trollope has seldom been heard, even though he devoted several works to countries that were at the time part of the British Empire. The reasons for this are fairly clear: first, Trollope is seen as the epitome of beefy Englishness and has so been used to buttress British patriotism in times of stress and more generally appropriated as a synecdoche for British national identity (Wolfreys 152). Second, Trollope's imperial fictions have largely to do with what are now (Australia, New Zealand) or have been until recently (South Africa) largely white-dominated settler colonies; thus his works do not address questions of racial subjugation the way, for instance, Conrad's are seen as doing. And third, Trollope's colonial works are given short shrift by traditionally conservative Trollope scholars, and thus lack the visibility that would draw them to the eyes of critics involved in the post-colonial project.

This neglect is regrettable, though, because several of Trollope's later novels, especially *Harry Heathcote of Gangoil* and

The Fixed Period, are vital to an understanding of what might be termed the changing literary demography of the English language in the nineteenth century. In 1800, English literature was being written in the British Isles and in certain of the far eastern portions of North America. The Anglophone canon was overwhelmingly dominated by writers who lived in England and whom, in most respects, only England knew. By 1900, North American literature had achieved such range and confidence that not only did North American writers such as Walt Whitman develop cults of fashion among the aristocracy in the mother country, but North American novelists like Henry James and Sara Jeannette Duncan had the confidence to address broader issues of British-colonial relations whose relevance and implications stretched to include the entire English-speaking world. By 1900, English was being written in five continents, and not only by expatriate Englishmen or white settlers, but by native Indians (Henry Derozio and Toru Dutt), by First Nations Canadians (Pauline Johnson), and, shortly after 1900, by black South Africans (Sol Plaatje) and Sri Lankans (Lucien De Zilwa). Trollope's colonial novels can be seen as an important index of this process of globalization. However English Trollope might have been in his own mind, his literary productions revealed that the English language was now no longer the exclusive property of Europeans, and that it would be used in very different ways from those envisioned by the metropolitan élite.

Although Trollope set a surprising amount of his fiction outside the British Isles, Australia and the Antipodes in general are by far the other territories most represented. Trollope's son Fred had emigrated to the colony in 1871, and the novelist subsequently paid two extended visits there. This biographical fact, and the literary production it occasioned, are no secrets; but they have seldom been explored to their full potential. It is due to the work of the Australian critic P. D. Edwards that this constellation has found its way into criticism at all. Edwards, in explicating Trollope's Australian fiction and its literary and historical relation to the Australia of his day, has virtually defined this area of study for the future. Edwards has not only elucidated the hidden Australianness of the Trollope canon; he has shown also how

Trollope can be seen, if not exactly as a part of "Australian literature," then at least as part of the field of reflection on what a literature of Australia possibly could be. As Edwards points out, Australian scenes and references have many a place in Trollope's work, without taking into account his travelogue of Australia and New Zealand published in 1873. Two of Trollope's novels, *Harry Heathcote of Gangoil* and *The Fixed Period*, are set entirely in the South Pacific, and are at the centre of his colonial fictions.

As Edwards and other critics have noted, the situation of the book's eponymous protagonist Harry Heathcote, is based upon that of Trollope's Australian son. The novel, though, is not a piece of untransmuted realism. *Harry Heathcote of Gangoil* is a deeply thought-out book, one whose interest lies in its most premeditative aspects. The book is premised as both a tale of Australia and a Christmas story. There is an obvious clash in these generic classifications enacted by the reversal of the seasons in the Southern Hemisphere. It is to make this clash more dramatic that Trollope undertakes one of the book's few departures from apparent biographical truth: its setting in Queensland rather than in New South Wales, where his son's plantation was actually located. The temperate climate of New South Wales is too much an approximation of that of England; what Trollope needs to undergird his book's structure is an utter contrast. He found that in the equatorial climate of Queensland, where Christmas is a hot and fierce season. Trollope seems to exult in this unfamiliar Yule: "From all this I trust the reader will understand that the Christmas to which he is introduced is not the Christmas with which he is intimate on this side of the equator—a Christmas of blazing fires indoors, and sleet and snow and frost outside—but the Christmas of Australia, in which happy land the Christmas fires are apt to be lighted, or to light themselves, when they are by no means needed (3-4)." What in England is a necessary rite becomes in Australia a superfluous ritual; yet, it is implied, the incongruity, the superfluous excess, of an Australian Christmas possesses instabilities bound to be exhilarating for the reader to contemplate. Christmas, customarily the site of home and hearth, becomes instead a symbol of exile and displacement. Whether Trollope's Australian argument manipulates the reader

or allows for truly vertiginous instability is the central question criticism of *Harry Heathcote of Gangoil* must confront.

The few critics who have written on *Harry Heathcote of Gangoil* regard the surface disjunction of Australia and Christmas as concealing a far less surprising conservatism. Trollope, on this view, sets his novel so far away only in order to emphasize values near-at-hand and close to home. The stolid, domestic cheer of an English Christmas will still resonate even in an Antipodean clime. Whatever the spatial coordinates of the action, a customary moral axis is maintained. This is a misreading not just of *Harry Heathcote of Gangoil*, but of Trollope. It is infrequently perceived how much of an advocate of social change Trollope was. In nearly every novel of his, there is a decided shift in power and in the nature of the society depicted in the book. Even in novels where the action takes place exclusively within the ranks of the aristocracy, such as *The Claverings* or *The Duke's Children*, the nature of that aristocracy is so thoroughly changed by the end of the book as to call its fundamental identity into question. That these changes are not radical or complete does not annul their effect. In *Middlemarch*, for instance, Lydgate and Dorothea entertain prospects of social change far more all-embracing than anything envisioned (at least by a character depicted positively) in Trollope. Yet these envisioned changes are foiled and their proponents are forced to submit to a constraining, disillusioned defeatism by the end of Eliot's book. Trollope may write books such as *Barchester Towers* where Anglo-Catholic conservatism seems to triumph over zealous reform, but even there Trollope's plot does not manifest a reconstitution of the social past. Social change, however piecemeal, actually occurs in Trollope (this point has been made especially well by Julian Wolfreys when he asserts that rather than re-establishing the old order Trollope "lets go" of control" [176]). This change is directed towards greater enfranchisement and social mobility and to the weakening of the entrenched order, which at the end of a Trollope novel is usually what Wolfreys terms a "decentred centre" (153). The mechanics of the plot in *Harry Heathcote of Gangoil*, however predictable, are no exception to this enfranchising and liberating practice. The title-character, the surrogate

for Trollope's son, is a "squatter," whereas his nominal antagonist, Giles Medlicot, is a "free-selector." "Squatter," whatever its overtones of arbitrary encampment in the context of traditional tenured landholdings, means "man of property" in the less precedent-bound Australian milieu. "Free-selectors," on the other hand, are more roving types who approach the landholding game in a more scattershot and *ad hoc* manner. Trollope's terms are sociologically accurate with regard to 1870s Australia; yet they seem a recapitulation of the purely English class antagonisms of the author's more typical works. In a series of developments familiar to Trollope's readers, Heathcote and Medlicot encounter each other, quarrel, and eventually resolve their dispute and find that they are indeed gentlemen of each other's calibre. This alliance is cemented by the convenient presence of Heathcote's unmarried sister-in-law Kate, who soon conceives a tender passion for Medlicot that leads to the virtually obligatory marriage at the end of the novel.

This resolution seems a complete imposition of English plot on Australian terrain, an almost complete act of colonial erasure. It is as such that the novel has been attacked, on those few occasions that it has not been ignored by Australian critics from the novel's publication up till the present. As Edwards points out, Australians of the 1870s were infuriated that the novel was even serialized in an Australian newspaper, and suggested that a British expatriate who had actually had the gumption to settle permanently in Australia, such as the brawling convict-writer Marcus Clarke (a close friend, incongruously, of Gerard Manley Hopkins), was more equipped for the task. But all these reprimands, though they gauge correctly the inauthenticity of Trollope's engagement with his Australian setting, miss the liberating arbitrariness that Trollope invokes even as he seems to be at his maximum of parochial imperial mastery. Consider, for instance, the conflict between the squatter and the free-selector. Could not its resemblance to previous English social conflicts recorded by Trollope underscore in fact the superficiality, the ultimate exchangeability, of all these conflicts? Rather than represent some existent social formation, they reveal that these formations are textually postulated and

constructed. The Heathcote-Medlicot conflict, indeed, bears as much resemblance to the wars between cowboys and sheepmen in any typical American Western as it does to Trollope's English class conflicts. By using the same scheme that he has used in limning English society to describe a very different Australian reality, Trollope exposes the mechanistic nature of his social vision, and thus prevents it from possessing a constraining definition of place and culture.

Here Trollope, far from being the hearty realist, is a forerunner of the postmodern, postnational floating signifier. This was anathema to the Australian readers of the novel at its time of publication and for many decades later: this was just the period of Australian national self-definition, marked by the emergence of Australian Federation at the turn of the twentieth century and the hegemony of the *Bulletin* school of writers, figures such as Henry Lawson and Banjo Paterson who affirmatively chronicled the emergence of a distinctively and autonomously Australian soul. Yet we are well positioned today to see the negative aspect of an ostensibly liberating nationalist autonomy, what Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra label "the dark side of the dream." In being "propagandistic" (167) for an "Australian legend," the *Bulletin*, as described by Hodge and Mishra, set up a vitalist rhetoric that exalted charismatic white males while excluding women and Aborigines. Thus the anti-colonialism of the *Bulletin* school attacked British rule only in order to construct a new settler hierarchy with its own methods of cultural subjugation. Trollope, certainly, is not an acceptable alternative; the "Kanak" or Polynesian migrant workers are depicted derisively, the Aboriginal population is virtually ignored, and the women in the novel are among Trollope's least emancipated. The only foreigner in the book treated at all positively is a racially assimilable German, and even he is from the principality of Hanover, a former possession of the British royal family—so hardly a foreigner at all. Trollope's Australia is white, male, and British (not even Anglo-Celtic). But, considering the impure nature of Australian anti-colonial braggadocio, Trollope can hardly be denigrated on this score.

And even Trollope is not without his observations on the nature of colonialism. In a pre-engagement reverie, Kate and

Medlicot talk musingly of home. Medlicot makes explicit the parallel between the squatters and the English country gentlemen at "home," and then Kate remarks that she can hardly imagine what things are like at home. The authorial overvoice then interposes, "Both Medlicot and Kate meant England when they spoke of home" (76). Given Trollope's customarily sardonic attitude towards his lovers, especially when their love concludes a plot, we can see in this something more than a reaffirmation that, no matter how far the geographical dislocation, Christmas will still be Christmas and home will remain home. Trollope is gently satirizing the couple's psychological inability to see Australia as home, even though they are Australians. This is the phenomenon that the Australian critic A. A. Phillips was to label "the cultural cringe," and the Australian historian Geoffrey Blainey was to attribute to "the tyranny of distance"—the constant tendency for Australians to see Britain as a reference point when in fact they were on the other side of the earth from Britain. Trollope, as his Australian travelogue shows, recognized the inevitability and desirability of Australian self-government. But he was aware of the gaps and pitfalls in an Australian national identity—much as he was aware of his own distance from anything "really" Australian. Trollope, as so often elsewhere in his fiction, knows his own inauthenticity. It is this inauthenticity that has kept him from being accepted by Australians even as an English chronicler of Australia. But is Trollope's inauthenticity really inferior to the cultural arrogance of a book such as D. H. Lawrence's *Kangaroo*, which attempts to appropriate and merge with its subject? Lawrence's mantic, machismo-laden imperialism, because it does not admit fictiveness, is more irredeemable than Trollope's; yet Lawrence's book is accepted as a para-Australian work the way Trollope's novel certainly is not.

Does anyone who writes a novel set in Australia become in some way a para-Australian? No, perhaps not; but it is interesting to trace the relations between the signifier "Trollope" and Australia. As mentioned before, Trollope's son settled in Australia, and his descendants continue there to this day. Indeed, the Australian Trollopes very early on became the only descendants in the male line of Anthony Trollope; when Trollope's descen-

dants inherited a baronetcy that had been in another branch of the family, that baronetcy passed to the Australian branch. Ironically, Trollope, the chronicler so often of the English aristocracy but never himself of that group, did have descendants who assumed that honour—yet they were Australians (Glendenning 509). The identity of “Trollope” the family name became Australian even as “Trollope” the literary “signature” (as Derrida would say) became associated with the bedrock core of English national identity. Can there be a better demonstration of the shifting nature of national identity in an English-speaking world that is no longer English but Anglophone—where a Trollope can feel at home yet not be in England? Anthony Trollope is an English writer, yet by virtue of his books and this odd anecdote of family history, is not some corner of him Australian, or at least splayed between the national identities of colonizer and colonized? Does not he have the same mixture of British and Australian that British writers who actually settled in Australia, such as Marcus Clarke, have in more equal measure? These are questions about national identity similar, if on a much smaller scale, to those frequently asked concerning contemporary post-colonial writers: Is Bharati Mukherjee Indian, American, or Canadian? Is Salman Rushdie Indian, Pakistani, or British? Is Derek Walcott St. Lucian, American, or a general citizen of the African diaspora?

Trollope certainly cannot be considered to have the place in the postcolonial canon of Mukherjee, Rushdie, Walcott, or even their more neglected earlier predecessors. Yet the insights of post-colonial theory can illuminate the fissures and instabilities in Trollope’s Antipodean fictions. The “pluralism of the national sign” that is one result of the colonial process in the view of Homi Bhabha (303) seems very reminiscent of Trollope’s deployment of Christmas and of the idea of home. They are duplications of a colonial original, yet their very sameness generates a disruption that calls attention to the instabilities latent in the colonial relationship. In the reversed space of Trollope’s Antipodes, both everything and nothing are different. Trollope’s combination of delight in the fissures of place and identity with skepticism about the stability of deep cultural differences anticipates the work

of contemporary postcolonials such as Janet Frame, Nuruddin Farah, Salman Rushdie, and Gerald Murnane. These upendings of fixed identities also give us a new Trollope, a Trollope who, in encompassing the globe, knows his own limitations yet uses those to see into the future with surprising prescience. Nearly a decade after the publication of *Harry Heathcote of Gangoil*, Trollope was to produce the greatest of his colonial fictions.

II Projected Time

The Fixed Period, published in 1882, is marginal in the Trollope canon, at least in terms of reception, simply because of what it is: a futuristic fantasy. Trollopian usually have been so threatened by the unrealism of the book, though, that they have constrained its thematic exposition as much as possible, making the book seem more a *jeu d'esprit* than a speculative voyage. The book concerns the effort of one Fidus Neverbend, the president of a fictitious future British ex-colony of Britannula, to legislate a "fixed period" of 65 years of life allotted to each citizen, beyond which they will be humanely put to death. The novel's depth, though, exceeds this theme, which has monopolized the few analyses of the book. The chief agent in this excess is, as with *Harry Heathcote of Gangoil*, the book's setting in the South Pacific. Britannula, unlike the meticulously sketched Queensland of *Harry Heathcote of Gangoil*, is fictional. It is described as a former dependency of New Zealand (referred to in the novel as its "elder sister" [5]), which, along with that country and Australia, have now "set out for themselves" with the overt permission of Britain. (Again, we see Trollope's yielding stance on the question of Antipodean nationalism). Although the apparatus of the fixed period provides the dominating conceit of the novel, it can be read more broadly as a diagnosis of the problem of colonial nationalism, a problem clarified by Trollope by projecting it a century into the future.

The point of Trollope's book is usually seen as satirizing euthanasia, and so it is described as "Swiftian" in the manner of "A Modest Proposal." But *The Fixed Period* is more truly Swiftian in the manner of *Gulliver's Travels*. *Gulliver's Travels*, as David Fausett points out, is the capstone of a centuries-long "mode of

utopian writing . . . closely bound with travel and human geography," which had the South Pacific area as its setting. Most of these were written when the South Pacific was still (in European eyes, of course) *terra incognita* or subject of a bare minimum of European exploration; thus Swift can set his various allegorical lands at England's Antipodes cheerfully indifferent to geography; the Antipodes for Swift are just a fictive inversion of the given rather than anything real in themselves. This allegorical tradition did completely fade once what Fausett terms "the closure of the global circle" (171) had occurred and Australia and New Zealand had been charted and subject to the routinizing sway of British colonization, symbolic of an abstract European universality that had triumphed, willy-nilly, over the entire globe. Both *The Fixed Period* and an American work such as Herman Melville's *Mardi*, Swiftian in both tone and setting, demonstrate this, as do contemporary works such as Peter Carey's *Unusual Life of Tristan Smith*, which in many ways rewrites this *topos* from a consciously subaltern and anti-imperialist perspective.² Interestingly, both Trollope and Melville had spent extensive time in the South Pacific region, yet both chose to use it as a basis for fantasy or allegory as well as setting more firmly realistic works there. In many ways, paradoxically, Trollope is less imperialist than Melville, whose attitudes towards the Pacific often herald a vulgar American expansionism.

Trollope's fantasy, though, has realistic consequences. Britannula is a certain type of colony. "Little Britain" by name, it is also a future Britain, standing for what Britain will be like in a hundred years, or what will characterize the geographically transplanted successors to the British cultural traditions. Trollope had already used this device in one of his earliest works, the unpublished *The New Zealander*, in which a future New Zealander diagnoses what has gone wrong with a declined Britain. The Antipodes are a mirror of Britain, yet a mirror with the perspective of futurity. One of the necessities of being a mirror-future of Britain is racial homogeneity. Britannula resembles Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and, during its days of white minority rule, South Africa rather than other British colonies such as India and Kenya. It is a colony where whites are a homogeneous majority that constitute

the body politic, not an administrative minority. Even the one exception to this homogeneity in the "real" Antipodean countries, the indigenous inhabitants (Aborigines in Australia, Maoris in New Zealand) are totally absent in *The Fixed Period* the way they had not been, albeit present only marginally, in *Harry Heathcote of Gangoil*. Britannula is what Stephen Slemon has termed a "Second World" country, neither fully imperial nor fully subaltern (31). President Neverbend is very much a product of a Second World mentality: overconfident in the righteousness of his own local notions, but also dependent on the residue of a "universal" Englishness, even if his own philosophy and Britain's itself eventually cross swords.

Neverbend should be assessed not just as the purveyor of an eccentric philosophy, but as a politician and national leader. There is an obvious "plot reason" for Neverbend to be President of his country rather than just a crackpot philosopher; the executive position gives him the efficacy to carry out his schemes. Yet Neverbend's conduct is precisely that of a militant settler nationalist. The innovation of the fixed period is not just an abstract reassessment of the nature and use of human life. It is an attempt to prune the aging husks of decadent Europe, to assert a youthful vigorous settler culture as superior to the aging imperial edifice which had produced this reassessment. Britannula may be allegorically the Britain of the future; but the Britain of 1882 is also present in *The Fixed Period*, very much the dominant imperial power, and always in sight throughout the actions in the book. Early on, Neverbend, the book's unreliable narrator, makes clear that his fixed period legislation is a nationalist, anti-imperial gesture. Commenting on the ultimate failure of his scheme (which has already been disabled by the time he begins recounting the story), Neverbend orates, "But it has been because the old men are still alive in England that the young in Britannula are to be afflicted . . ." (10). England is associated with age and time-bound traditionalism, Britannula with the innovative breezes of fresh national vigour as represented in the euthanasiac legislation enacted by its "young Assembly" (5). Neverbend's experiment, although clearly heinous to anyone who thinks twice about it and opposed by every countrymen of

his mentioned in the book save for the cravenly opportunistic Abraham Grundle, requires overt British armed intervention for its overthrow. The reason for this is, implicitly, not that the people of Britannula lack conscience, but that, as in the case of some revolutionary nationalist leaders in our own time, Neverbend is so identified, as the founding President of Britannula, with that nation's anti-colonial self-assertion as to make his ouster by his own people politically inconceivable.

Britannula, though a fictive and allegorical nation, is a nation nonetheless. It is important that there is both a Britannula and a Britain in the book. And Britain does not just emerge as the *deus ex machina* at the end, but figures throughout the book. Britannula has a decided inferiority-complex towards the mother country. Its capital city is Gladstonopolis, this being as clear an example of the cultural cringe and of postcolonial mimicry as Kate and Medicot's yearning for "home." One of the few breathing-spaces in the book's rather relentless plot involves a cricket match between Britannula and Britain, complete with futuristic mechanical implements and colonial ironies that make the reader wish that the West Indian cultural critic and cricket fan C. L. R. James had been transported through time and fictional world in order to comment from the sidelines. And even Neverbend, symbol of Britannula, feels that his exile at the end gives him the greater opportunity—to go to England and propagandize for his beliefs; only in England will the ultimate merit of these beliefs be decided. Britain is, indeed, as much master of the world in Trollope's projected "1980" as in 1882.

Thus the irony of the book's denouement, when Britain, in order to prevent the enactment of the first death mandated by the fixed period legislation, repossesses Britannula and reduces it once again to a status of dependency, complete with colonial governor. The end of Neverbend's experiment is coextensive with the curtailment of his nation's autonomy, which will only be restored "with the agreement of England" (167). Given that an Englishman is writing the book, the casting of Britain in the role of liberal policeman of global wrongdoing may be seen simply as a product of cultural arrogance. Yet Trollope does not present Neverbend's ouster moralistically, and Sir Ferdinando

Brown, the newly installed colonial governor, is not presented as a hero. Although Trollope's postulation that global predominance would still belong to Great Britain a hundred years after the Victorian era was hardly clairvoyant, much the same role is being played by an English-speaking power. (Interestingly, even Trollope's powerful late twentieth-century Britain is made possible only by the assumption of further Civil War-like divisions within the United States; for Trollope, the only conceivable variety of Anglophone imperialism would be British, a view the twentieth century did not come to share.) Kipling saw that imperialism would be ephemeral in the 1890s; Trollope may not have had this insight, but he was certainly no proponent of a triumphalist, unremitting imperialism. His satiric jibes at then-current British politicians (John Bright, Lord Salisbury, and of course Gladstone himself are all lampooned), or their remote "grandchildren," in the course of the book show a healthy irreverence for jingoistic claims. In truth, either British or Antipodean nationalists can find little to cheer for in *The Fixed Period*. Rather than celebrating imperialism as the only acceptable guarantor of liberal humanitarianism, Trollope is critiquing the arrogance of both British imperialism and local settler nationalism. Much like African writers such as Chinua Achebe in *Anthills of the Savannah*, Trollope does not see being opposed to an unjust old order as any excuse for perpetrating an unjust new one, as was arguably the result of *Bulletin*-era Australian nationalism. The political reverberations of the novel demonstrate that Neverbend's role as emancipator of his country from Britain is inextricably intertwined with his role as proponent of the fixed period theory.

Yet Neverbend is not just a political caricature. He is also involved in domestic complications owing to the fact that it is his best friend, and loyal seneschal in the founding of the Britanulan commonwealth, that is to be the first man who, having attained the requisite age, will be forcibly admitted to the "College" where life's termination will be administered. Thus Neverbend is torn between duty and friendship. To further muddle matters, Neverbend's friend, Gabriel Crasweller, has a daughter, Eva, who attracts the tender interest of Neverbend's own son Jack. Jack is thereby also torn between filial duty, which would

prompt him to support the involuntary end to the life of the same man whose daughter he desires. These domestic entanglements are not, as critics have alleged, an incompetent contradiction to the novel's satiric-philosophical armature. They are necessary to flesh out the book, to give Britannula a local habitation and a name. Without them, the book would be a mere allegory or exemplum; with them, it is a thick and multi-textured work.

The novel's domestic aspect particularly deepens the character of Neverbend himself. By positioning Neverbend in myriad and conflicting roles—as President, as father, and, not to be overlooked, as first-person narrator—Trollope makes him more than a one-dimensional caricature. David Skilton, in his introduction to the new Oxford paperback edition, observes that the novel is not “ironic in the simple, everyday sense which implies a reversal of all views expressed in order to reveal the ‘truth’ of the author's own opinions” (xiv) and that we “are thrown back on our own resources in our negotiations with the text” (xvi). Neverbend is a man of complex motives embedded in a complex narrative situation. Paradoxically, at the same time he is trying to execute his best friend Crasweller he is serving as a benevolent godfather to the romance of his son with Crasweller's daughter Eva. Skilton comments that the romance of Jack and Eva is given “little importance” (xvii) by the book, but in fact it has great significance. Far from just tying up the division of opinion in Britannula over the fixed period, much as the marriage of Kate and Medlicot had done with respect to the dispute between squatters and free-selectors in *Harry Heathcote*, the romance between the children of Crasweller and Neverbend gives the reader a glimpse of what (a more benign) Britannula will be like in the future.

It is this futurity which is at the heart of the power exerted by *The Fixed Period*, a power which, unlike Britain's, has waxed rather than waned with time. The “1980” in which the book takes place was not seriously intended by Trollope as a futuristic prediction of what life would be like a century hence. Therefore, where Trollope does not affirm, he cannot be said to lie. But the futuristic setting of the book does mark its readerly reception in a

way that would never occur with a book possessing an emplotment strictly contemporary to its authorship. When Trollope set his book in "1980" he was not guaranteeing that the book would necessarily be read in or after the "real" 1980. But, providing the book were still read, the empirical arrival of "1980" would stand as a prime meridian in the book's reception-history, a point where the book would be no longer a futuristic fantasy *per se* but a futuristic fantasy of the past.

We would think that most of the fun of comparing the two versions of "1980" would be at Trollope's expense. Yet this is not really true; Trollope never pretended to a predictive veracity; *The Fixed Period*, unlike Orwell's *1984*, does not lose its power once the future year depicted passes and the book's predictions are shown to be wildly wrong. *The Fixed Period*, as evidenced in the role Jack and Eva play in the plot, is not about a determinate future, but an openness to futurity and, more specifically, a speculative and rather prescient interest in the nature of the British colonies in the next century. How eerie then that for all of Trollope's own intentional short-circuiting of the status of his novel as prophecy, *The Fixed Period* did end up foreshadowing world events of the "real" 1980. In that year, the status of a former British colony was finally resolved. This colony had, some years before, unilaterally declared independence in order to retain patently unjust policies which otherwise would have been jettisoned by the colonial power. A just solution involving the repeal of the intolerable policies was only brought about by the temporary repossession of the colony by Britain.

The nation in question was Rhodesia, later Zimbabwe, which to preserve segregationist white minority rule unilaterally revolted in 1965 and, under the charismatic leadership of the white-supremacist zealot Ian Smith, held out against world opinion and the internal, black-led "Chimurenga" or resistance movement until British mediation engendered the election of an integrationist black majority government under the leadership of Robert Mugabe (see Verrier 149). The Mugabe government assumed office (and Zimbabwe became independent) on 18 April 1980, only a scant month before Trollope's fictional "May 15" on which Sir Ferdinando Brown was instructed, in the

name of Britain, to repossess authority over Britannula from Neverbend and his fixed-periodists. Perhaps this is much more coincidence than prediction; but it is a happenstance whose significance Trollope, who had travelled in South Africa and attendant regions and had written on the racial situation there, would have recognized. If the similarity between *The Fixed Period* and Zimbabwean history does not prove Trollope's merit as a literal forecaster, it does show how engaged he was with questions of Empire, and its future. In some oblique way, Trollope anticipated the theoretical conditions under which a writer such as the contemporary Zimbabwean novelist Tsitsi Dangarembga would come to write. A small achievement, perhaps; yet a noteworthy one.

The colonial Trollope may be only a small part of the metropole-centred Trollope canon, and its suppositions about imperialism, for all their forward-looking aspects, may be too conventional, too time-bound, and too anchored in codified racial and national assumptions of their era to be fully appreciated at the turn of the twenty-first century. Yet Trollope's South Pacific fictions are major contributions to the literature of Empire in the Victorian Age, whose significance has all too infrequently been recognized. After reading *Harry Heathcote of Gangoil* and *The Fixed Period*, no reader can suppose Trollope merely to have been the laureate of the parochially English. Indeed, Trollope emerges as a principal agent in the globalization of English literature and the English language—that is, the change-over, occurring more than has been realized within the nineteenth century, from English literature to Anglophone literature. This global process, carried out in the wake of imperialism, often contradicted and subverted imperial norms, lending impetus to the decolonizing tendencies whose consequences still reverberate for us today. In turning Englishness upside down, Trollope does not close, but extends the global circle.

NOTES

- ¹ Of course, Said's analysis of *Mansfield Park* in *Culture and Imperialism* is not just a close reading or source-study, but a model for a comprehensive engagement of the colonial presence in the mainstream English canon.

- 2 Shortly after the publication of *The Fixed Period* there was a wave of futuristic fiction published by New Zealand settler writers of the late nineteenth century considering the position of New Zealand in a hypothetical twentieth century (or after). Lawrence Jones mentions "a large group of only nominally 'New Zealand' fictions . . . usually purporting to be written from a New Zealand of the future (any time from 1942 to 2990) and showing the decline of England and Europe and the rise of Australasia . . ." (115). What *The Fixed Period* may achieve is an interrogation of Jones's phrase, "only nominally"—even nominal tropes can theorize historical and linguistic change.

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